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ABSTRACT

In its fifth year, the Hispanic Orientation to Life in America Project (Project HOLA) served 472 Spanish-speaking students of limited English proficiency. The aim of the program was to help students develop English language skills, enter mainstream classes, and understand Spanish and American culture. The program provided instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) and native language arts (NLA), and bilingual content classes in mathematics, science, social studies, economics, and psychology. The program met one of it's stated ESL objectives, and achieved its objectives for orientation to American culture in one semester. It was not possible to assess NLA objectives, although skills did increase. Content area objectives were met in social studies and science in one semester. The attendance objective was met. It was not possible to determine whether the program met its objectives in staff development, study skills, or career studies. The parental involvement goal was not met. Program weaknesses included lack of coordination or centralization, changing student population, and shortage of resources. A program strength was that it benefitted its target population in ESL instruction, bilingual education, and orientation to American life. Inclusion of native history and culture in the curriculum and offering of parent courses are recommended. (MSE)

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OREA Report

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

HISPANIC ORIENTATION TO LIFE IN AMERICA

PROJECT HOLA
1987-88

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EVALUATION SECTION
John Schoener, Chief Administrator
June 1989

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

HISPANIC ORIENTATION TO LIFE IN AMERICA

PROJECT HOLA
1987-88

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HISPANIC ORIENTATION TO LIFE IN AMERICA
PROJECT HOLA*

1987-88

SUMMARY

- Project HOLA was fully implemented. During the 1987-88 school year participating students received instruction in English as a second language (E.S.L.), native language arts (N.L.A.), and bilingual content areas. The program also provided for staff development and parental involvement activities.

- The program met one of its two objectives in E.S.L. and partially achieved the other one. It also partially met its objectives in content area classes and achieved its goal in student attendance rate. Because of lack of data, it was impossible to judge whether the project had met the N.L.A., study skills, career studies, or staff development objectives. The program did not achieve its parental involvement goal.

The Hispanic Orientation to Life in America project (Project HOLA) was a Title VII-funded program with a focus on instructing students on life in America and providing support services. In its fifth and last year of funding the project served 472 Spanish-speaking students of limited English proficiency (LEP). The aim of the program was for students to develop English language skills to enter mainstream classes and understand American and Spanish cultures.

Project HOLA provided instruction in E.S.L. and N.L.A. and bilingual content area classes in mathematics, science, social studies, economics, and psychology. Participants were selected on the basis of the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) test and interviews, and generally remained in the program for two and a half to three years before they were mainstreamed.

The program met one of its objectives for E.S.L.: students showed an average Normal Curve Equivalent (N.C.E.) gain of 3 on the LAB, which was statistically significant. In the Orientation to Life in America classes, the project achieved its objective in the spring but not in the fall. It was not possible to assess the N.L.A. objective as no data were provided. However, more

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*This summary is based on the final evaluation of the "Hispanic Orientation to Life in America (Project HOLA) 1987-88" prepared by the OREA Bilingual Education Evaluation Unit.

than 65 percent of the students passed their N.L.A. courses, demonstrating an increase in skills in that area. The project achieved its objective for content area classes in social studies and science in the spring but failed to meet the objectives for mathematics in spring and for all three subject areas in the fall. The program achieved its attendance objective: attendance rates of program students were significantly higher than that of mainstream students.

Because of lack of data it was impossible to determine whether the program met its objectives in staff development, study skills, or career studies. It did not achieve its parental involvement goal. It was apparent, however, that a variety of staff development and parent activities took place.

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) personnel used standardized test data and information obtained from school and program records, interviews, and observations to evaluate the program.

The number of participating students in project HOLA increased from 383 in 1986-87 to 472 in 1987-88. There was an influx of illiterate and low socioeconomic status students as compared with previous years.

Drawbacks of the project included: lack of coordination and centralization, changing nature of the student population, and shortage of resources. Strengths were that Project HOLA benefited its target population in terms of E.S.L. instruction, bilingual education, and orientation to American life.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Include native history and culture in N.L.A. courses.
- Offer courses to parents as a way of encouraging interest in their children's education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Hispanic Orientation to Life in America (Project HOLA) was in its fifth and last year of Title VII funding at William H. Taft High School in the Bronx. Project HOLA served 472 Spanish-speaking students of limited English proficiency (LEP). This group represented a significant portion of the school's total student population.

Project HOLA's main goals were for students to: develop English language skills in order to enter mainstream classes as quickly as possible; gain an understanding of American culture and society; acquire knowledge of the job market and an awareness of career interests; improve their Spanish language skills and cultural knowledge; and progress academically by taking bilingual content-area courses until they learned enough English to be mainstreamed.

Participating students received instruction in English as a second language (E.S.L.), Spanish language and culture, and bilingual mathematics, science, and social studies.

The principal and teachers at Taft High School reacted positively to Project HOLA and supported its efforts.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

William H. Taft High School is located in the northern part of the South Bronx, off the Grand Concourse. The surrounding neighborhood is heavily populated by poor black and Hispanic families. While there is some renovation underway, many boarded-up, abandoned buildings and stores are within sight of the

school.

Because of the area's many Spanish-speaking residents and merchants, its affordable housing and good access to public transportation, the neighborhood is favored by recent immigrants from the Caribbean and from Central and South America.

STAFF

HOLA's Title VII staff consisted of a director (80 percent time) and a curriculum and resource specialist (40 percent time). Their responsibilities included providing language testing for the entire school, coordinating student placement and course offerings, developing curricula, arranging excursions, planning on-site extracurricular activities, and offering informal advice and counseling. In addition to his administrative and counseling duties, the project director taught one E.S.L. class and the curriculum-resource specialist offered three E.S.L. classes. The assistant principal (A.P.) for E.S.L. and foreign languages supervised the project director and curriculum specialist. The program director had a master's degree and nineteen years' experience in bilingual/E.S.L. education. The curriculum-resource specialist had a master's degree and six years of relevant experience.

Municipal tax-levy and Chapter 1 monies funded Project HOLA's instructional staff. Bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals were supervised by their respective content area A.P.s.

According to the project director and curriculum specialist,

this supervisory arrangement created problems, such as difficulty in finding a time when all the program's teachers and paraprofessionals could meet.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Taft's enrollment in 1987-88 was 2,698. Over half of the students (52 percent) were Hispanic, 43 percent were black, and 5 percent were Asian. Spanish was the home language of the majority of the school's students, 472 of whom were classified as LEP and who participated in Project HOLA. All program participants were from low-income families, as evidenced by their eligibility for the federally funded free lunch program. The participants in Project HOLA were selected on the basis of the LAB test and interviews.

Many of the students from the Dominican Republic came from rural areas or small towns and had little education. As a result, the school added a class for the many Dominican students who were limited in both Spanish and English skills. There was a wide range in proficiency in English and in native language skills.

Many students had part-time jobs to supplement family income and came to school exhausted and without their homework. They often lived in single-parent home situations, some with uncles or aunts. There was considerable mobility, especially among the Puerto Ricans, often resulting in cultural and linguistic confusion.

Project HOLA served 472 students in grades nine through

twelve. The majority of the students who left the program midyear were fully mainstreamed. A sizable number graduated.

Of the 293 students present in the spring, Project HOLA provided data for 240. One hundred and twenty of these students had participated in the program for one year or less, 84 for two years, and 36 for three years.

The majority of the students were born in the Dominican Republic (56 percent) and Puerto Rico (31 percent). The remaining students were mainly from Central and South America.

The project provided complete age and grade data for 413 students; 37 percent were in the ninth grade and decreasing proportions were in each succeeding grade. (See Table 1.) Sixty-three percent of the students were overage for their grade placement.

STUDENT PLACEMENT, PROGRAMMING, AND MAINSTREAMING

The program's approach to mainstreaming was a planned, gradual transition, in which students enrolled in more subject area courses in the mainstream as their proficiency in English increased. Project personnel felt that mainstreaming students in this way prevented them from going through culture shock.

Students were mainstreamed as soon as they scored at or above the twenty-first percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB).* According to the project director, students who

*The Language Assessment Battery (LAB) was developed by the Board of Education of the City of New York to measure the English-language proficiency of nonnative speakers of English in order to determine whether their level of English proficiency is

TABLE 1

Number of Program Students by Age and Grade

Age	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
11			1		1
12	1				1
13	2				2
14	9	4			13
15	26	17	4		47
16	43	33	8	2	86
17	47	37	29	8	121
18	18	20	29	11	78
19	7	9	17	13	46
20		2	9	4	15
21			1	2	3
TOTAL	153	122	98	40	413*

Overage Students				Programwide	
Number	115	68	56	19	258
Percent	75.2	55.7	57.1	47.5	62.5

Note. Numbers in bold area reflect expected age range for grade.

*Data were missing for 59 students.

- The largest number of program students were in the ninth grade; the smallest number were in the twelfth.
- The percentage of program students overage for their grade ranged from 48 in twelfth grade to 75 in ninth.

were mainstreamed usually performed well. One indicator of their success was that four of the top ten graduating students were or had been in the bilingual program. The number one student in January was a program student.

Students generally remained in the program for two and a half to three years before they were mainstreamed. A student who was fully mainstreamed in subject area courses could continue to receive program services such as counseling and other extra-curricular activities. Many students came to the office to seek advisement from the project director and the curriculum specialist.

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sufficient to enable them to participate effectively in classes taught in English. Students scoring below the twenty-first percentile on the LAB are entitled to bilingual and E.S.L. services.

II. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) evaluated Project HOLA by examining student test data, interviewing school and project personnel, and observing classes.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Project HOLA proposed instructional objectives in E.S.L., N.L.A., content area subjects, study skills, and career studies.

English as a Second Language

- As a result of participating in the program, students will make statistically significant gains in English-language proficiency.
- As a result of participating in the program, at least 70 percent of the Project HOLA students will achieve a passing grade of 65 percent or above. (Orientation to Life in America).

Implementation. Project-administered tests, interviews, and analyses of records determined student placement. All students took two periods of E.S.L. per day. In addition, first-year students were required to take Orientation to Life in America (O.L.A.), a program-developed course taught in English that used E.S.L. techniques. (The 1983-84 evaluation report included an extensive curriculum review of this course.)

The beginning E.S.L. component consisted of three periods of E.S.L. a day, including one period in which the teacher used the O.L.A. curriculum. The transitional classes emphasized reading and writing and other skills necessary to pass the LAB criterion.

The English-language arts component of HOLA consisted of courses in E.S.L., O.L.A., college-career research, discovering New York City, listening/reading/writing skills, and literacy skills. Taft High School offered all classes in both the fall and spring semesters.

Program students received graduation credits for English-language arts classes. Students went on cultural field trips and participated in social activities such as contests, dances, and parties.

The classroom paraprofessionals offered individualized help, clerical help, and translation when necessary. There were three Chapter 1 paraprofessionals.

An OREA field consultant observed an intermediate E.S.L. class of 16. The aim of the lesson was to familiarize students with concepts related to distance. The teacher explained distance and direction (e.g., left, right, middle, second from right, far left, etc.). The teacher used English throughout the lesson but the students spoke in Spanish some of the time.

The field consultant observed an advanced E.S.L. class taught by a new teacher. The class focused on reading and discussing a short story. The students first read the story to themselves and then read it aloud, with the teacher correcting any mispronunciations. The students were studious and responsive. An educational assistant helped with administrative tasks and with the preparation of materials.

Outcomes. To assess students' achievement in English, OREA

data analysts computed a correlated t-test on students' LAB N.C.E. scores*. The t-test determines whether the difference between pretest and posttest mean scores was significantly greater than would be expected from chance variation alone.

The project provided complete LAB pretest and posttest scores for 134 students. Students in all grades made an average gain of 3 N.C.E.s, which was significant ($p < .05$). (See Table 2.) Thus, Project HOLA met its E.S.L. objective as measured by the presence of gains in language proficiency. The overall effect size was low, indicating that the gains were only slightly meaningful educationally**.

Of students taking level I O.L.A. classes, 46 percent passed in the fall and 69 percent passed in the spring. Of students enrolled in level II, 61 percent passed in the fall and 78 percent passed in the spring. Therefore, the program achieved the course passing rate objective only in the spring for level II classes.

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*Raw scores were converted to N.C.E. scores, which are normalized standard scores. They have the advantage of forming an equal interval scale so that scores and gains can be averaged. For the norming population, N.C.E.s have a mean of 50, a standard deviation of approximately 20, and a range from one to 99. Scores can be compared to the norming population.

**The effect size, developed by Jacob Cohen, is a ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. Effect size (E.S.) is interpreted to indicate educational meaningfulness, and an E.S. of .80 is thought to be highly meaningful, while one of .20 is considered to be only slightly so.

TABLE 2

Pretest/Posttest N.C.E. Differences on the Language Assessment Battery, by Grade

Grade	Number of Students	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	t value	Effect Size
9	60	6.3	7.4	6.7	7.3	.4	8.2	.39	.05
10	37	7.6	9.1	11.8	11.0	4.2	11.6	2.24*	.36
11	35	3.1	4.0	8.6	12.9	5.5	12.0	2.71*	.46
TOTAL	134"	5.7	7.4	8.7	10.4	3.0	10.7	3.28*	.28

*p<.05

"Total includes two students for whom there was no grade level information.

- The mean gain of three N.C.E.s was statistically significant.
- The overall effect size was small; gains were of only slight educational meaningfulness.

Native Language Arts

- Students participating in the program will show significant gains in Spanish language achievement.

Implementation. An OREA field consultant observed an N.L.A. class of 22 students. The aim of the lesson was to learn and practice the vocabulary of El Trovador. After the students completed an assignment from the textbook, some read aloud, and the teacher led a discussion that focused on reflexive verbs. The students actively participated.

According to the project director, native language courses would have been better had they included native language history or culture.

Outcomes. The project did not provide any data to evaluate the N.L.A. objective as proposed. Results on teacher-made tests in N.L.A. show that 66 percent (of 282) in the fall and 71 percent (of 209) in the spring, achieved a score of 65 or more, indicating that students did, in fact, acquire skills in N.L.A.

Content Area Subjects

- As a result of participating in the program, at least 70 percent of the content area students (math, social studies, and science) will achieve a passing rate of 65 percent or above.

Implementation. Bilingual content area courses consisted of a number of mathematics, science, and social studies courses, as well as economics and psychology. All courses paralleled those taken by mainstream students. Two of these courses, biology and sequential mathematics, were added to the program this year.

In a mathematics lab that a field consultant observed, the students received individualized instruction from the paraprofessional. The students were all working on different assignments--fractions, decimals, etc. They used two English-language workbooks. The teacher spent each session translating workbook questions/problems into Spanish so that the students could understand the material. The teacher told the consultant that because most students were recent arrivals, she used Spanish predominantly. However, she said that a couple of the HOLA students preferred to use English as the language of instruction. The teacher stated that the main obstacle to mainstreaming lay in the home and community life, which encouraged and perpetuated the use of Spanish. She stressed the need for Spanish-language materials.

In an economics class, the focus of the lesson was the state labor legislation and government policy protecting employees. The teacher led a discussion, mostly in English, on social services and on employee benefits administered by the government, such as workers' compensation, social security, and unemployment insurance. Sometimes the teacher would translate her questions or points into Spanish. Most students used Spanish in their questions, answers and comments, even though the teacher encouraged them to use English.

The focus of a consumer mathematics class was graphs. The teacher drew a bar graph on the board that compared the weights and heights of boys and girls. She spoke in English about 60

percent of the time. The students used Spanish almost exclusively, except when they said words such as "height," "weight," "inches." The teacher told the field consultant that the students have difficulty following the English-language textbook; thus she was constantly translating. She felt that the students would do much better with Spanish-language materials.

Outcomes. The improvement in mean grades in science and social studies from fall to spring is impressive. (See Table 3.) In the spring, the project achieved the proposed objective in science and social studies and fell only a little short of achieving it in mathematics. Fall performance was not as strong, particularly in mathematics, in which only 44 percent of the students obtained the passing grade.

Study Skills/Career Studies

- As a result of participating in the program, at least 70 percent of the Study Skills students will achieve a passing grade of 65 percent or above.
- As a result of participating in the program, at least 70 percent of the Career Studies students will achieve a passing grade of 65 percent or above.

The project did not provide any data to evaluate these two objectives.

NONINSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Project HOLA proposed noninstructional objectives in the areas of attendance, staff development, and parental involvement.

TABLE 3

Student Achievement in Content Area Courses

Area	Fall		Spring	
	Number of Students	Percent Passing	Number of Students	Percent Passing
Mathematics	265	44.2	254	67.3
Science	95	67.4	77	81.8
Social Studies	283	65.7	233	74.2

- A larger percentage of students passed their content area courses in the spring than did in the fall.
- In the spring, over 70 percent of students passed their science and social studies courses.

Attendance

- As a result of participating in the program, students' attendance rate will surpass the schoolwide attendance rate.

Students responded well to the support given them and attended classes regularly. As a way of emphasizing attendance and scholarship, Project HOLA staff members awarded certificates and prizes to students with perfect attendance and exemplary scholarship.

Data analysts compared the attendance rate of program students to the schoolwide rate. An examination of the results indicates that the attendance of program students (85.5 percent) was much higher than the schoolwide attendance (70.7 percent). There was a difference of 18 percentile points in favor of program students. The project easily met the attendance objective.

Staff Development

- Teacher participation in college-level training.
- Teacher participation in workshops and/or in-service training sessions.

Nine teachers took university-level courses at various institutions. Other staff development activities included monthly department meetings of Title VII staff and of foreign languages/E.S.L. staff. The director, curriculum specialist, and bilingual teachers attended in-school workshops in foreign languages and E.S.L. each semester. The program director attended a New York State Title VII workshop in fall 1987.

A staff development specialist often came to the school and observed classes, discussed her observations with the teachers, both individually and collectively, and demonstrated computer use.

Because of the way in which the staff development objectives were stated--without criteria by which to indicate achievement--and although staff development obviously took place, it is impossible to say whether the project met its staff development objectives.

Parental Involvement

- As a result of the program, at least 20 percent of the parents will show an interest in the project.
- As a result of the program, at least 20 percent of the parents will participate in workshops and/or classes in English and techniques of study skills.

Twenty parents participated in each semester's parental orientation meeting. Twenty parents also attended the first monthly parent-teacher conference, but fewer attended subsequent meetings. The program director thought that parents might feel intimidated by the school. He said that he would like to see courses offered to parents as a way of encouraging interest in their children's education. According to one of the counselors, only about three parents would come to open school night.

Because of the generally low parental attendance and participation, Project HOLA was unable to meet its parental involvement objectives.

Guidance Services

Project HOLA provided the following guidance services to students: counseling, advisement, career orientation, job placement, and home visits. In 1987-88, the program placed more emphasis on working with families than it had in previous years.

Extracurricular Services

The project sponsored a number of extracurricular activities designed to help students become familiar with mainstream American culture. The most notable of these was the Bilingual Association of Student Educators (BASE), an organization for bilingual students with good grades and good attendance records. The students in this organization helped their homeroom teachers, worked in the project office, and tutored their fellow students.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Project HOLA was effective and largely successful in 1987-88. It met one of its two E.S.L. objectives, its science and social studies content area objectives in the spring, and its attendance objective. Because of lack of data, it was impossible to judge whether the project had met its objectives in N.L.A., study skills, career studies, or staff development. It did not achieve its parental involvement goal. However, it was evident from the data provided that Project HOLA students acquired N.L.A. skills, that the project was making attempts to involve parents, and that staff development activities were taking place.

Both the project director and the curriculum specialist felt that the decentralized nature of the project had been a drawback. New arrivals from the Dominican Republic were frequently illiterate or semiliterate, the low socioeconomic status of the students frequently necessitated their working after school, and the absence of parental involvement added to the challenges with which the program was faced.

A number of persons interviewed reiterated (as in previous years) the problems of shortage of books and of Spanish-language materials and bilingual content-area instructors.

According to one of the counselors, learning the language well enough to be mainstreamed continued to be a problem. Usually it takes two and a half years to be mainstreamed, but

many students were not in the United States long enough (e.g., they came as seniors). Taft encouraged students to go to college. Many, however, had not yet learned English well enough by the time they graduated to do so.

Clearly Project HOLA, in its fifth and final year, has benefited its target population in terms of E.S.L. instruction, bilingual education, orientation to American life, and advisory services.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Include native history and culture in N.L.A. courses.
- Offer courses to parents as a way of encouraging interest in their children's education.